

**PRESS CONFERENCE:**

**Rear Admiral Patrick Driscoll, Spokesman, Multi-National Force – Iraq  
Major General Qassim Atta, Military Spokesman for Operation Fardh al-Qanoon**

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**REPORTERS:**

**Ziad[ph] Nihadel[ph] from Hora TV  
Ahmed Jassem from Al Arabiya Newspaper  
Doug Smith from The Los Angeles Times**

**Unidentified reporters from Al Ein Agency, Radio Sawa, Al-Mutamar Newspaper,  
and Baghdad Educational Organization**

**REPORTERS 1-9**

**\*REP1 = REPORTER 1**

**\*INT = INTERPRETER**

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

In the name of God, As-Salāmu `Alaykum everyone. I'd like to thank Admiral Driscoll for inviting me for this press conference and I'd like to thank you all for coming today. Today we'll give you a briefing on what has been achieved by the Iraqi security forces that conduct Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon in Baghdad starting from June 6th until June 21st, 2008. First, while meeting the commander in chief, Prime Minister Maliki, while he met with the commanders of those who work for the Commanding Operation in Baghdad on June 16, 2008, they focused during the meeting on certain aspects that the Commanding Operation of Baghdad will work on implementing in the next stage and those aspects were according to the following points. 1) Resolving the issue of the recruitings of the Sons of Iraq and the Awakenings in a way that corresponds with instructions from Prime Minister Maliki to integrate the good and professional members to the Iraqi security forces as soon as possible and also integrate the other members in the other ministries in the government that is according to their qualifications. 2) Setting plans to evacuate the buildings of the government from those who occupy them and to bring them back to the ministries and the institutes that those buildings belong to. 3) Concentrating the efforts to bring back all the displaced families to their original homes,

especially after the improvement in the security in all places in Baghdad with no exception. And a few days ago, there was a statement by the Commanding Operation in Baghdad and we said, according to the statement, that the security situation is now good and to reopen the embassies in all the...in all Baghdad. In addition to that, the Commanding Operation in Baghdad is ready to provide security to the embassies and also to the consulates that will be opened in Baghdad in the future. 4) We have also concentrated or [are] activating the role of the court and those who...and the perpetrators of the organized crime taking into consideration of the security level in the country. The Commanding Operation in Baghdad issued a resolution to present a soldier's [unintelligible] according to the law of punishment to present. And he's accused of killing a group of female students in Abdullai[ph] area last month. And as you know, the incident led to the martyr of a female student and it injured three others. We have approved the paperwork for the judicial council and he's presented now to the court so that he will be prosecuted. After some of the media were attacked by the guards in the Al-Karkh Hospital while accompanying the governor of Baghdad, the Commanding Operation of Al-Karkh formed a[n] investigatory committee and we apprehended Lieutenant Ahmed Ali Abdul Hassen[ph] who works...who is from the 2nd Division. And immediately the force that guards the hospital has been

changed. And the Commanding Operation...commander of Operation Baghdad said that all forces should be...should behave in a good way with the citizens and to guarantee not to repeat this incident again. And the Commanding Operation in Baghdad asks all the officials to coordinate with them if they intend to visit any kind of institute so that there won't be any kind of violations as happened. And we also would like to stress that for the media and the journalists to coordinate with the Media Committee in Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon when they want to go to any other...to any place so that we prevent any attacks or physical attacks or violence against the journalists. And this is something that followed up by the prime minister and also the commanding operation...the commander of the operations in Baghdad. In order to prove the presence and also...and the achievements of Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon and also to bring back the displaced families, terrorist groups exploded...detonated a car bomb in a...the first Huriya area and this led to the martyr of 47 civilians and the injury of 87 others. And this is according to the statistics of the Ministry of Health until today. And also several stores and cars were damaged due to the explosion. And the Media Committee in the Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, we express our sorrow for those victims and their families and we hope that the wounded will be...wish them a speedy recovery. 5) Our Iraqis have some inhabit...inherited some certain

traditions that is...which is opening fire randomly to express their joy or sorrow. And you know this phenomenon has a negative impact because it causes injuries among the civilians. That's why the Commanding Operation in Baghdad asks our citizens to prevent such an act or doing...opening any fire to express their joy in case our soccer team hopefully won in today's game. And we have issued orders to the security forces to capture those who violate this law. And they will be presented to the court whether those people were from the citizens or from the security forces. And I was with the prime minister's office and he told me...they told me that some of the checkpoints and soldiers are the ones that open fire randomly. That's why there were orders given to all the units to deal with this in a strict way. And it did happen last week after our soccer team won over the Chinese soccer team. And we had deaf incidents and we also had 30...23 inci-...people were injured due to this phenomenon. And those things are tragic. It's enough bloodshed. It's enough gunshots. So that's why all the people and all the Iraqis in Iraq and in all the other provinces. And yes, we do hope that the Iraqi soccer team wins today and we do want to celebrate. But to express the joy should be away from opening fire and gunshots whether it was from the citizens or the Iraqi security forces and the checkpoints. The total of the operations: we killed 1 terrorist, detained 169 wanted individuals. We detained 99 suspects.

Liberated 6 kidnaps. Defusing...we defused 147 IEDs. We captured 41 cars with no license and registry...registration papers; 951 different kinds of weapons. And also 190 mortar rounds and 190 kilograms of TNT. And I think you've seen this rifle that we have found in one of the schools. This is a homemade rifle. It has a silencer. And after the press conference you will get to see the details of this rifle. And this is used from inside the cars and sniper operations against...targeting the security forces or even targeting the citizens. And this is a homemade rifle as I've said. The terrorist groups and the organized crime that use such kind of weapon. And this is an indication that they are running out of ammunition and now they're heading to manufacture weapons. And those things are dangerous, of course, because they are outside the safety regulations. And using them could even lead to the death and the killing of the person who is using it. And we found it in one of the schools and we wanted to show it to you today through the media and you could show it to the people as well. I think that the briefing of the Commanding Operation in Baghdad is over and I'd like to give space to my friend, Rear Admiral Driscoll, to present his briefing for the Multi-National Forces.

**RDML  
DRISCOLL:**

Good afternoon. As-Salāmu `Alaykum. First of all, I'd like to thank

Major General Qassim Atta for joining us here today and for his information and presentation. I am very encouraged by some of the progress he described in Baghdad. I've been in Iraq for several months now and over my course of time here I've been privileged to work with the brave and dedicated Iraqi partners like the one sitting to my right. I've been able to watch as they build their capacity and capabilities and as the government has worked to improve the quality of security forces. Recently I've been seeing their efforts pay off. Today the Government of Iraq is leading security operations in all three of its major cities and now also in Maysan Province. As Major General Qassim Atta was able to share with you, the people of Sadr City of Baghdad have welcomed the rule of law and the opportunity to share in the security gains achieved across Iraq over the past year. The people of Basra and Amara also welcome the opportunities for peace and economic development that the security forces are creating. Iraq still faces enemies dedicated to tearing the country apart. As we saw last week, there are those still who blow up cars in populated neighborhoods. In Mosul and the surrounding countryside, we know that there are still foreign terrorists who want to reconstitute their bomb networks, who want to impose hateful ideologies on the Iraqi people. There is still a hard fight ahead, but as people like Major General Qassim Atta prove daily, this is increasingly an Iraqi

fight. The Iraqis engaged in the fight are growing more capable every day. As the Iraqi security forces do their job to make sure the citizens of this country are no longer intimidated by terrorists and extremist militias, their work is being followed by other areas of government. We are working with the Government of Iraq as it focuses on restoration of essential services, on reconstruction of businesses and homes, and the creation of jobs and opportunity. This has happened as security operations have progressed in Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. It is part of the plan for our operations in Amara. So far operations are going well there. The government has shown its will and the Iraqi security forces have shown their own resolve. When the Iraqi government decided to reassert civil authority in Basra and Baghdad, operations began with some violent confrontation. So far in Amara there has been little resistance to restoration of law. Weapons have been turned in and calm is prevailing. Amara demonstrates this government's commitment to extend security and the rule of law to every corner of the country. The people of Maysan need to have the same opportunity to live free of fear as the people of Anbar and the people of Basra. No place can be a haven for weapons smuggling, just as no neighborhood can be left to militias to impose their own will. The government is on the offensive and will secure these areas within Iraq. As I said, as security improves, hope and opportunity



follow. We will continue to work with our Iraqi counterparts to create security conditions that will allow hope and opportunity to become the norm. And we will now take your questions.

**REP1:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Ques-...Ziad[ph] Nihadel[ph], Hora TV, to General Atta. You've mentioned several important points at the beginning of your briefing regarding the instructions from...orders from Prime Minister Maliki and also to bring back the displaced families. The past days and we've seen there are some violations and there are some IED attacks and explosions. And those things went back again but not that much. But still, there are...we still witness some IED explosions. So how would you explain this?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Thank you. The issue for the displaced families is one of the essential points and one of the principles that Fardh Al-Qanoon operation is succeeding now. And I was with the commander of the operations in Baghdad and we talked in details about this topic. And we and Prime Minister Maliki say that the success of Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon has to do or is linked with the return of the displaced families. Now we are setting new mechanisms and there

are some orders...instructions from Prime Minister Maliki. We have to set a plan to give them a timetable for all those who occupy the houses of the displaced families. And I think next month we will announce a final date so those who occupy the homes and houses of the displaced people would leave. And if not, the security services will raid the house and will evacuate the occupants. This thing should be over. And it's a really important point and it's one of the aims of the terrorist groups. And they did plan. And we always say that they worked ever since the beginning to start such a...doing such a dirty step of dividing Baghdad according to a sectarian basis. And this is well known by all the Iraqis and also the media. Thankfully, after the great successes in the last year and the great achievements, of course, and the return of the displaced families because so many of them returned whether individually or by groups, the upcoming plans will be swift and decisive because we have provided a good security environment. And now we have the Ministry of Immigration is now compensating the families that suffered from the military operations. And this topic will be resolved and should be resolved in this year which is one of the indications of the success of Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon. And we have said to Prime Minister Maliki that should...this topic should also be a topic of interest by the lawmakers, religious leaders from all their sects and backgrounds, and also by the tribe leaders. And

we had some...several good examples. In Al-Saydiyah area, the Committee of the Reconciliation and Follow-up held a commit-...a conference there. And this conference witnessed the return of 300 families to the 820 quarter in Saydiyah neighborhood. And this thing will be applied in all places in Baghdad. The situation now is better. There is the role of the citizens as well. This is a responsibility of all Iraqis and not just the security forces. Those people...the people also should work on resolving this issue as fast as possible so that we can bring back the displaced people outside the country like in Egypt, in Syria, or even Jordan so that we could bring them back to Iraq. The phenomena of the IEDs and the car bombs and why they are coming back, if we go back and compare those car bombs and IEDs with that of the past, it's huge; there's a huge difference. And one of the reporters said that for the past three days we haven't seen any IED explosion. And this is an indication of the success of Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon. Yes, there are some cells that [are] still working and there are some certain groups that still want to influence the morale of the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqis as well so that they try to reorganize themselves. But even if we lose a...one citizen every day, this will be a huge disaster. Yes, our forces are developing. A few days ago we've been in Abu Nuwas Street and I think some of the agencies and media came with us. And we've seen that life has...is being normal and the Karrada

and Mansour area and all the places in Baghdad are stabilized. That's why those situations...the situation now is better to bring back the families. And we always capture every day members in al-Qaida. We also find weapon caches. And also, this is what I've shown you today, the homemade rifle. And I think this rifle was used against the innocent Iraqis. Our troops are developing. Our army is developing. The police is developing as well. But the important thing is that the citizen himself is part of Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon and is part of the achievements in the Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon.

**REP2:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Question to General Atta. Al Ein Agency. The explosion in Al-Huriya neighborhood is one of the worst for the past month, especially after Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon started and the good improvement that we've seen. This explosion led to a burning of several house[s] and damaged several stores and cars as well. Is there a committee from the government to compensate those who lost their stores and cars because now they...?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Yes, the governor of Baghdad and the chief of Provincial Council in

Baghdad instructed the...and asked the citizens that suffered from this explosion so that they could provide and file applications to be compensated. And yes, I do approve with you that this is really a tragic incident and it also depicts the nature of the enemy which is targeting the innocents and why the people of Al-Huriya are being targeted in such a time. Yes, we do have plans to bring back the displaced families and it is still on to Al-Huriya area and Adil neighborhood, Al Jamya neighborhood, and Saab al Bour area. [In] those four areas we are working on bringing back...we are working to bring back the displaced families to them. And the Commanding Operation in Baghdad is working to resolve this issue as fast as possible. Our...we are challenging this and we always say that all the displaced families should go back to Al-Huriya area. We have to bring back all the displaced families and also to provide them with a good environment, provide them with the compensations. And this is being followed up by Prime Minister Maliki and also the commander of the operation in Baghdad.

**REP3:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Ahmed Jassem. Al-Arabiya Newspaper. Question to General Atta. This year witnessed a security development which is a good one especially in pursuing the outlaws. However, what we see now is that some of the security forces violate the law and some of the

official convoys of the officials...of the Iraqi officials...

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Open fire?

**REP3:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Yes, randomly. Yes. And they drive also on the wrong side and those...this phenomenon shouldn't happen after those successes. And we hope that they end. And a question to Admiral Driscoll. Anbar Province used to be one of the provinces that the terrorism used to control in the past. But after you provided help for the people in Anbar and you managed to defeat al-Qaida there, the citizens of Anbar Province are asking you to support them to reconstruct their province in a good way. And also to build an American university just like the one that we have in Kurdistan because now they are friends and they were standing next to you to fight terrorism. Thank you.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Well, this kind of behavior is an individual one. Yes, one of the checkpoints are really good one because they...some soldiers really give the ultimate sacrifice and behave in a good way with the

citizens. And this is one of the principles that we always tell the soldiers about every day. Yes, there could be some unaccepted behaviors by the citizens or the security members. And we always stress on resolving this issue. And we have legislated a law to punish all those who violate [it]. Yes, I do agree with you regarding the convoys of some of the Iraqi officials. As for going on the wrong...but as through opening fire randomly or even driving on the wrong side, you know that Baghdad is heavily populated and if you fire any single gunshot, it could really kill a citizen. And that's why we always ask the Iraqi officials to educate their bodyguards because while the official is in his car and he doesn't know what the bodyguards could do. But I also demand the officials to educate the bodyguards and their...those who accompany them to behave in a good way and also to abide with the law because abiding with the law starts from the military person, [it] starts from the policeman. So that's why the policeman, the soldier should be a role model for all those people and so everyone could follow their example. And we have instructions to the...we always ask and the soldiers and the people to abide by this law. And also we ask the officials to go back and check with their bodyguards so that they will respect the law. Thank you.

**RDML  
DRISCOLL:**

In regards to Anbar Province, obviously we have seen a dramatic

increase in security there. It kind of led the process of improved security much to the responsibility and credit to the Iraqi security forces there, the Sons of Iraq, and coalition forces. I think that the trend now in Anbar is to move from the violent kinetic to the rebuilding process. And part of that...a key part of that is education. And as you know, the Ministry of Education has initiated several programs to get the education process jump-started because there were many people that lost the opportunity for education. One of...part of that process is getting the university system up and running again. I'm not familiar with the request in Anbar for that university, but it sounds like it is aligned with what the expectations are. Please, follow up?

**REP3:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Yes. An American university, just like the one that we have in Northern Iraq, in Kurdistan so that...

**RDML  
DRISCOLL:** I see.

**INT:** Yes.

**RDML  
DRISCOLL:** I'm not familiar with the request for the American university. But I can get the information back if there is such a request and if it is



being acted on. Okay. Thank you.

[A brief exchange ensues in Arabic that was not translated.]

**REP4:** Doug Smith from The Los Angeles Times. Forgive me if this question was answered when I was having trouble with the translation. How many families have had their houses confiscated when they were away from their neighborhoods? And how many of those have been restored at present and how many more have to be restored?

[A brief exchange ensues in Arabic that was not translated.]

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Actually this topic and according to the statistics that we have in the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, in all Iraq are around 100,000 families were displaced from all places in Iraq. Now the statistics and according to the statistics we...20,000 families went back to their homes. And we have 80,000 families [that] are still displaced. And I think the Council of Representatives approved to alloca-...allocations over \$140 million to compensate the displaced families and also to rebuild their homes. And especially for those

who are outside Iraq. This percentage...we hope that all the families could go back. And hopefully there are some good indications because in the area of Doura we've see several families coming back like in Abu Chir, Abaya[ph] neighborhood and also in several areas in Baghdad. Every day we see and we witness the return of the displaced families. But, of course, Prime Minister Maliki and the aspiration of the Commanding Operation in Baghdad says that this topic in...of the displaced families should be resolved...should...through all the...our potentials so that we could bring back all the families to their homes.

**REP5:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Question to General Atta.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** It's a note or a question.

**REP5:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Question. You've said that some places in Baghdad are actually demilitarized. When will you announce that Baghdad is a demilitarized place and there are no weapons in it? And the Awakenings, for instance, the Awakenings are actually controlling

and who is controlling the Awakenings? Because the...there is no control over the Awakenings. Some people are complaining about the...what the Awakenings are doing. And then my question to Admiral Driscoll. The spokesman for the minister of defense said there are preparations for a large operation in Diyala Province. What have you done for this province as MNF and what is the problem in Diyala Province in your opinion. Thank you.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Yes. For your...to answer your first question, yes, we do have a plan to make Baghdad a city that is void of any weapons. We've started from Kadhimiya area. And I think that everyone noticed the relief among the citizens in Kadhimiya area to make this holy city void of any kinds of weapon. And now we're taking weapons away from Sadr City. And we have also future plans to make Baghdad itself a city of peace, a city that is void of any weapons. The efforts now go to reconstruct...or focusing now on reconstructing and reconstruction and also on the economic level, also to provide job opportunities for the unemployment. And building Iraq starts from Baghdad and starts from reconstructing Baghdad. The side that controls the Awakenings and who controls the Awakenings, now the security forces in all sectors have Awakenings and we've

changed the name of the sec-...Awakenings to recruits from...volunteers from the Sons of Iraq. And everyone knows the result of the work of the Sons of Iraq or the Awakenings. We cannot deny that there are some certain violations and some certain misbehaviors by some of those Awakenings. But, of course, this doesn't depict on the whole picture of the Awakenings. And I've said that Prime Minister Maliki instructed to resolve the issue of the volunteers for those who are qualified to be integrated into the security forces. And those who are not qualified to join the security services will be integrated in the other ministries in the government. Either they will receive...because there have been some instances that some of those members received bribes. And we've...yes, we've heard some complaints; we cannot deny this. But in general, the presence of the Awakenings or Sons of Iraq is a good and a positive thing that will help in stabilizing Iraq. And step by step we are working on clearing the security services from the corrupted members that try to distort the image of this important entity and....

**RDML  
DRISCOLL:**

In terms of Diyala, as you recall, in December of this year a large operation began called Phantom Phoenix. And Phantom Phoenix was designed to, in part, go north of Baghdad, up through the Diyala River Valley in the direction of Mosul to drive al-Qaida out. And that is...that has been very successful. And in...as a

cumulative effort, you saw the operations by Iraqi security forces with support of coalition forces in Mosul. And that operation is ongoing in an intensified manner now. What we've seen as operations are successfully driving al-Qaida out of the Mosul area, they are trying to escape into certain other areas. And Diyala River Valley is one of those area as well as Jazeera Desert. As you know, the Iraqi security forces and coalition forces are still very focused on al-Qaida and they still represent a very lethal threat. And so ongoing operations, as you mentioned with the MOD operation, and coalition forces will continue to target in Diyala in the months to come.

[A brief exchange ensues in Arabic that was not translated.]

**REP6:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Radio Sawa. If we go back to the incident of Al-Huriya explosion, there has been some reports and news saying that there will be a committee that will investigate the incident and the explosion after the area that witnessed security stability. And there were some accusations against certain figures that were part of JAM. However, honestly, we haven't seen any results of that investigation until now. And could you also...so could you tell us about the investigation? And also, question to Admiral Driscoll regarding the

Anbar Province. There were several dates set to hand over the security issue. But until now, we don't know the exact date that you will handle the security to the Iraqi forces in Anbar. Is there a date?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Yes, I do agree with you that in the past period, we haven't seen any violations or any attacks targeting the stores in such a horrific way. Yes, we are planning to bring back families in Al- Huriya area this month. And the terrorist groups and the outlaws and the gangs, of course, they do not wish this to happen and we know this. And I've mentioned the areas that still haven't witnessed any return of the displaced families as we aspire. We have formed a committee with coordination with the Multi-National Forces to investigate this incident. And this committee is still under...carrying out the investigation. Yes, we do have some cer-...information and we talked about some of the information. But the MNF talked about the...some of the information. But now we are still in the early stages of the investigation. We have contacted several citizens and from the...the forensics also took some details information so that we know the kind of explosion and...explosives and kind of vehicles that was used. And those things actually take some time so that the investigation could be exact. And hopefully, after the

investigation is over, we will tell you the results. And this is what we always do. The Media Committee always show[s] you the facts as we find them. And after the investigation is over – hopefully in the coming few days – we will let you know. And the Commanding Operation in Al-Karkh told me, yes, the investigation is still ongoing. And we have some certain points that has to do with or have to do with those people who carried out the explosion or the attack. We still need some time to figure this out. And after that we will announce it. Thank you.

**RDML  
DRISCOLL:**

In terms of Anbar, turning over security responsibility, that...as you know, the PIC [Provincial Iraqi Control] process is one that is very standardized where the security in the province is examined and then recommendations are made up through the Iraqi government and the decision is made by the prime minister. I know that that process has moved along quite a ways and that process is now at the highest level. It's not been determined exactly when it's going to be turned over. But, as I said, now the process has moved up to the highest level for the decision-making. So I'll leave it at that.

**REP7:**

[Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Al-Mutamar Newspaper. General Atta, there is a question for all...that all the Iraqis think of about the buildings that...for the

government. From one side you say that Prime Minister Maliki said the displaced families should go back to their homes and this is a good thing. And I consider that this is one of the successes of Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon. But on the other hand, you also say that Prime Minister Maliki said to...stressed on evacuating the occupants of the buildings...of the government buildings. Who is occupying those buildings? Are those the parties or the political blocks or the Iraqi citizens? But if there were some citizens that occupy those buildings, so this will be a contradiction between two points: bringing back the displaced families and also evacuating the citizens from those government buildings.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Well, thank you for the clarification. The issue or the topic of the displaced families will be implemented. Those who occupy the build-...the government building, we have institutes and we have buildings. For instance, one of the previous ministries are actually occupied by people in an illegal way. And this ministry is.... So where were those people before the fall of the regime? Where did they used to stay? Some people have homes and they rented their homes and they went staying in those government buildings. Everything that is illegal should be over immediately, should be



resolved immediately. And those things are being dealt with in a really humanitarian and legal way. You can find that there is a displaced family who left his home and there is another family who is occupying his home. So this is illegal. This is illegal and this is unethical as well. And even the...our religion, Islam, does not accept this. We also ask the religious people to go and talk about this issue, talk about the displaced. You cannot occupy the house or building of someone else. If you didn't have a home in the past, you should do it in the right way. You should join certain organizations that will help those people who don't have or never had a home before. Yes, we do have information that some of them rented their homes and now are living in a building that is for the government. This is illegal. We don't have a contradiction here. Our constitution is the thing that we're based upon. And I think that all the citizens approve with the instructions of the government to enforce the rule of law and also to bring back life normally. If you don't have a home, armed person...arm-...I don't have a home. I don't have a land to stay in. And until now, we hopefully...the government could give us a home. And this is for the people. And this is a true thing. But to go and stay in a building which was a ministry, this is not good. This is illegal. And he does have a home and he rented it for someone else. So this is not a right thing. We need to restore order and to enforce the rule of law. And this is not a contradiction.

But I consider it a really good point and a phenomenon.

**RDML  
DRISCOLL:**

We have time for one more question.

**REP7:**

Yes, I do approve with you and yes, the media do talk about this.

Yes, there are some people who sacrifice certain places.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Yes, and I do add for this point that some of those buildings that [are] occupied are...you can see that crime is being conducted in those places. So that's why those things are actually bad. And that's why we have orders to resolve this.

**REP7:**

[Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:**

There are some places that.... So my question is and also to Admiral Driscoll, is there still in Baghdad areas that are still hot zones and still witness tensions, especially that witness special groups and al-Qaida? Do we have any areas? And what are those areas that still witness tension or special groups? And also the question is for Admiral Driscoll. And Admiral Driscoll, don't you think that the special groups and al-Qaida are...both of them are the worst problem that Iraqis are facing now? But there is a joint

between...point between those two organizations. So is there a[n] operation to find out the identifications of those people? Do they work together? Do you think they work together?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Well, I hope and I will always invite the media to go with us on tours and I don't think that we haven't been to any place in Baghdad. We've been to every certain place in Baghdad. And the Media Committee and Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon and the spokesman for Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, we all take the media on tours to every place in Baghdad. And we have seen the stability and the security situation there. Those things like fighting the terrorism and outlaws with the plans that we have, those things need time. And everyone knows the security situation in Doura and especially in the Saha sector, [unintelligible] sector or Medea[ph]. And there is a request by the tribe leaders and the religious people that are asking the displaced families to go back. And the tribe leaders and the religious people will provide security to the displaced families that go back to those areas. And this means that there is security and stability in those places. But is it 100% in all Baghdad? No. You can see that there could be a crime or an incident here or there. But as compared with the other countries,

like, for instance, in the United States, you can see that there are some murders, rape, robbery. Those incidents happen in all the countries that even witnessed security stability. And those things happen here too. So when you see that there is a robbery over a certain place, I was hoping that on a certain channel you say that our security forces found 137 members or captured a gang in Al-Mansour area. And this is what we did. But you never mentioned it. You didn't cover this story. And within hours, we responded and we captured and foiled those attacks or attempts. Yes, there could be a robbery like in a bank in the U.S. or UK. Those things could happen. Is it possible that we have a murder in Russia or in any other place? Yes, those things happen. And those things happen in any country. And to reach the ideal status – and we are going to reach to that ideal status, the security ideal status. And this is what...this is my opinion and my assessment that the media or all the...you can...if you want to go to any place and cover the stories and make stories about the displaced families and you can go with us. Because you have to distinguish between the terrorist crimes and the other sorts of crimes. So, like, for instance, seven months ago, I don't think you were able to go to Al-Kadhimiya or Al-Adhamiyah area. But now, I'm sure that you can go to Al-Adhamiyah alone and you can walk in Al-Adhamiyah and you can take your family through that place. And ten days ago, I was with my family in one

of the evenings and we went and we had dinner in Abu Nuwas area. This is just not a propaganda. We were wearing civilian uniforms. A year ago I was not able to do that. I was not able to go to Abu Nuwas Street. And now we have...Amanat Baghdad is working on...and also we hope the Ministry of Electricity also will work on the power so people want to go out and enjoy their time. So the government of Baghdad is also looking forward to open several and more parks in Baghdad. And I think that if you wanted to go to Al-Karrada, we go back early. But now, me and some friends, we were able to stay there until 10:00. And people wanted to stay much longer because the situation is much better now and this is an indication. And staying late is really a good development and one of the successes for the Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon. And we always praise the role of the citizen. Our aspiration is that all the places in Baghdad will witness stability and security. And hopefully, this year, 2008, will be the year...as you have seen, was the best because there was a reduction in crime, in organized crime, in terrorist activities. And it's better than 2007 and [200]6 and 2004 that even the...when the terrorists explosions and attacks occurred. And all the ministries say that and stress that the situation is developing. And we have also asked the embassies to come back and open their embassies here in Baghdad. But the situation in Baghdad is much better to bring back all the embassies in all

Baghdad with no exception. And the security forces and Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon will participate, of course, in providing security for any embassy with coordination with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And that's why I say there is a development in your aspirations and your...to bring back life normally to all places in Baghdad will happen. Hopefully soon. Thank you.

**RDML  
DRISCOLL:**

I agree with what Major General Qassim said. Remember, this is a counterinsurgency fight and so there are elements of al-Qaida and special groups criminals still in Baghdad. But they've been greatly reduced and are continually under pressure. Part of that fight against special groups and al-Qaida is to cut off their funding. So many times if we interdict the flow of funding, they've got to resort to criminal activity in order to finance their activities. And so you see a crossover between criminal activity which results sometimes in casualties and deaths, and also terrorist activities. That, as General Qassim said, the balance has been reduced dramatically in Baghdad and throughout the country. And, as he alluded to, since March of 2004, we're at the lowest level of violence. But we'll get to the point where, you know, the criminals are hopefully being pursued as aggressively as the terrorists are and the violence levels will continue to come down. But are there...is there still a presence in

the city? Yes. Is it greatly reduced? I think so. But once again, our forces are continually targeting them because they are still a presence and need to be eliminated. Okay. And I promised you one last question and then we've got to go.

**REP8:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Baghdad Educational Organization. Question to General Atta. You've talked about the violating or physical attack against the media and the journalists. And some of the journalists went to the officials and...to make an interview with them and some of the bodyguards physically attacked the journalists. And there is a law that protects the journalists that is being discussed at the Council of Representatives. So my question is how will the government protect the media and the journalists? And what is the mechanism that you're applying to protect those journalists?

**MAJ GEN ATTA:** Well, our procedures and mechanisms at the Commanding Operations of Baghdad for those who...and I think this happened...it was just a...an in-...one...a single incident, one of the [unintelligible] Bagdadiya journalists. And we dealt with this immediately to punish the person in the security service. And this is one step. And I think...and I hope that that law will be approved at the Parliament. And we always say that the Iraqi Syndicate of

Journalists...and we do coordinate with them so that we could work out this problem. And we appreciate the role of the journalists with—of course, without distinguishing the channels that actually criticize the operation of Fardh Al-Qanoon because we need to prepare a good environment to protect all the journalists. And this is the role of the security services. And personally, me, and the advisor of Prime Minister Maliki, we follow up any kind of violations whether they were from the security services or whether those were from the bodyguards of the officials that target the...or the officials or the journalists. And then we do deal with this continuously. And we do hope from the journalists and the media to build trust between them and the officials and the security forces and the services. Because when I've asked one of them and told him that the...an official came to you and the journalist said I don't know him. So if there was a coordination with the Commanding Operation in Baghdad, then this is what we always stress so that the journalists could contact us. If you want to go to any place and if you have any story, just call us – and we have a Web site, we have a phone number – so that we can give you one of the officers that works with us and he could go with you and to cover that story with an official or with any other story that you want to cover. So sometimes there could be some arguments, but if we have a coordination previously, this would be better. We once had an



accident or an incident with the Prime Minister Maliki's office with one of the journalists and also with the bodyguards of Prime Minister Maliki. Yes, we do not accept this. But at the same time, we also demand for journalists not to violate the laws of the security forces because they are doing their job in providing protection. And because they.... and it did happen in Sina'a Street. A person told him that he's a journalist – and he told the security services. And after that he detonated himself. He told them that he was a journalist. So in order to avoid those things, we wish that if you want to go to any place – and I think we've given you so many tours and some of them said it's enough that we're going this...here and there. Because we always show you and give you tours about displaced families or the weapon caches and we always take the media with us. And you know that the weather now is really hot and so we take you with us. And when you go with a[n] official or the security member, you will be respected and you will be treated in a good way. So—and you will be protected by us. But sometimes the journalists go along and that unit has no idea or no notification of the journalist that is coming. So when we have a...like a small issue between a journalist and a bodyguard, those things should be dealt in a good way. But we always make a big fuss of it. All the media talk about it that...like it was a really big problem. And the TV stations as well. And it's a simple...it was a problem but it was a

simple problem and it could be resolved. The security forces are still now developing and maybe this security service didn't know what the freedom of journalists mean[s]. They don't know. They are not aware of this. When you tell them that you're from the certain newspaper, he will say that I don't know that newspaper. So this is what we stress on. You'd give me...you contact me and I will give you a commander that will go with you and you can make stories as you want. You can criticize, you can support the operation of Fardh Al-Qanoon, but you should contact us so that we can provide people that could go with you. Last question.

**REP9:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Last question. The Parliament now is working on approving a bill to provide protection for the journalists in Iraq. And we know that...the media know that every bill of law when it's approved it should have a good security environment. Do you think that Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon has a good environment to implement this law to protect the journalists? Because the Parliament will approve this law. So do you have a good security environment to implement this law? And this is my question. And as Al-Astanzariyah[ph] robbery, have you found out who did this?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Have you seen the marriages and the weddings at the hotels that take place? This is an indication that life is getting normal. The return of the displaced families, the essential services and providing them – all those are providing the environment...the security environment. And also reopening the embassies. All those are indications for providing a good security environment. And we are ready to provide any kind of help that you want. I would like to thank you today. And I would like to thank Admiral Driscoll for inviting me. Thank you.